

M. Florence Johnson

Denton

Life

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Life: My Questionings

I.

I asked a bird—'t was a dainty thing
As ever lifted a jewelled wing—
"Tell me of Life?" though he flitted by,
Nor heard my query, he hummed reply,
"I only know that a nameless bliss,
Is life—my life—on a morn like this."

II.

I turned and asked of a sporting child,
With golden curls and a blue eye mild,
"What, pray, is Life?" In his ringing laugh
I heard, "The pleasures of life I quaff,
While these are mine need I ask for more?—
What Life may be?—or hath been before?"

III.

I asked again, of a good old sage,
Whose locks were white with the frosts of age,
"Dear sir," I said, "can you tell me aught
Of Life, so eagerly lived and sought,
What it may be?" With a thoughtful smile,

Life:

My hand he pressed as he spake the while,
“A shining drop in a shoreless sea,
Is human life! yet again,” said he,
“While Time shall take and the Endless give,
Nor mind, nor matter shall cease to live;
For mind *is* matter, sublimed and free,
While matter is mind that is yet to be,—
And these, eternal, through change and strife,
Are ever varying forms of Life.
Aye, matter, though never it seem to live,
Is Life, conditioned as negative;—
Conditions vary, the form is changed,
Atomic forces are re-arranged,
Then sentient life into being springs,
And Mind is born of the *Soul* of things.—
The *Soul of Things!* with its wondrous light,
Guarding our Past from the shades of night!
The *Soul of Things!* with its cloudless ray,
Gilding the path to eternal day!
Thus Mind, endowed with celestial force,
By Soul as substance, and Life the source,
Proclaims itself, with inherent right,
The *conscious* form of the Infinite.
But, while conditions determine Mind,
Its power of purpose, its growth, its kind,—
Determine matter, as land, or sea,

My Questionings

As sun, or planet, as rock, or tree,—
And while conditions determine all
The *forms* of Life, whether great, or small,
Life, *unconditioned*, conditions all!—
Life Absolute, is ‘the All in All.’”

IV.

I asked the earth, with her ribs of rock
Fractured by many a frightful shock,
“Where dwelleth Life?” “Though the time,” she
said,
“Has been when chaos and earth were wed,
When all my sisters and I were one,
Locked in the arms of our sire, the sun,—
When, one by one, from his warm embrace,
He cast us off, in the realms of space,
And left us there, in his frenzied ire,
Where cold consumes as if quenchless fire,—
Yet Life was with us, for Life was there,
Moulding and fashioning everywhere.
And Life avers that his dwelling-place
Is ev’ry measure of Time and Space.”

V.

I asked the sun as he sank to rest,
Flaming with glory the golden West,
“How old is Life?” and he answering said,

Life:

"The Past is past, but is never dead!—
We count by cycles and change, your years
Are viewless points to the wheeling spheres;—
The changes come and the goal we gain,
The cycle measure, then round again.
Still in these limitless fields," he sighed,
"Stars have grown weary—as suns—have died,
Yet Life was there while the changing form
His pulses thrill and his currents warm;
And still his features and form they take,
For Life will never his own forsake."

VI.

I asked the stars as they, one by one,
Came twinkling forth when the day was done,
"Bend low," I said, "Can ye name the hour
When Life was born, with his matchless power?"
And while I listened the answer came,
"Through countless ages we've been the same,
Yet Life, long eons before our birth,
Our molecules numbered, the weight, the worth,
Of ev'ry atom, its form, its force,
With care was valued and marked its course.
We follow, then, in the way he leads,—
We read his will in his mighty deeds,—
But whose is the hand that shall turn the page
Where Life records his enduring age?"

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VII.

I turned me now to "Old Father Time,"
Whose measured tread on his march sublime,
Might wake the praise of a seraph's tongue,
"Tell me," I said, "Is Life old, or young?"
A voice from the Long Ago replied,
"Life ever was!" And the restless tide,
The answer brought o'er Eternity's sea,
"Life ever was! Life shall ever be!
All forms, all forces are thus unite,
And Life, the All, is the Infinite!"

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